

# GREENING THE WASTELAND

**VOLUME I: NO YARD? NO PROBLEM!**



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## Introduction

Welcome to Greening The Wasteland, a zine primarily aimed at urban folk who are looking for ways to bring nature back into their surroundings but aren't quite sure how to start.

This issue, "No Yard? No Problem!", offers a handful of ways to start growing food at home if you don't have good access to outdoor areas, don't have much space, or don't have much money. Low-income friends and/or apartment-dwellers, this one's for you!

Many apartment-garden guides assume you have multiple large rooms, spacious windowsills, a balcony or rooftop or patio, and also don't have a landlord who will crack the shits if you put so much as a hook in the ceiling. If only!

Food autonomy is important for us all. The cost of living continues to rise while wages stagnate, and food poverty continues to be a widespread issue. We can and should be reducing our dependence on corporate food systems if we are able. Better yet, we can participate in building our own networks for food, developing respectful and fair relationships with each other.

So, let us save a bit of cash, learn a new skill, and fill our tummies & our hearts!

## Starting Small (Really Small!)

Not yet confident growing plants? This pocket sprout won't feed you, but it's a handy way to start your planting journey.

You will need:

- Small glass vial, jar, clean pepper shaker, etc. – if it has a lid, please poke some air holes.
- Basil seeds – but feel free to experiment with other herbs!
- Topsoil – carefully liberated from wherever you can find it
- Narrow stick – toothpick, chopstick, or just the kind you pick up from the ground!
- Water

The steps:

1. Push soil into vial using stick. You want ~0.5-1 cm of soil in the base.
2. Pop a seed in there!
3. Push more soil into the vial, another ~0.5 cm should do it.
4. Add 2-4 drops of water, you can use the stick.
5. Make sure it gets plenty of light, though not direct sunlight. Ambient natural light or LED light works.

Extra info:

It should take about a week to see, and probably only needs a couple drops of water per week.

If your sprout starts getting quite tall, or there's more than one sprout, transfer to a bigger container if you want to keep them growing. If all goes well, you will soon be able to harvest some fresh basil for your meals.

## Why, Aloe There!

Aloe Vera is a useful plant and relatively easy to look after. You can eat the gel inside (try it in a smoothie!), plus it can work as an extra moisturise boost for your skin & hair. It's very soothing on insect bites and burns too.

You will need:

- large glass jar, or small clay pot
- some small rocks – these are to help with drainage
- some dry potting mix, or make your own with 1 part soil to 1 part sand
- aloe pup – this is a baby aloe

The steps:

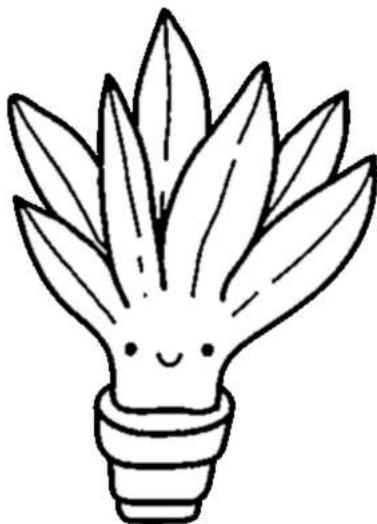
1. Add rocks to jar, to about 1/3 of the way full.
2. Fill another 1/3 of the jar with potting mix.
3. Trim any overly long roots, so it's easier to place.
4. Place the plant onto the soil, no need to push it in.
5. Fill up the rest of the jar with soil, covering the roots & base.
6. Let it sit for about a week then water it. It likely only needs water once a week maximum.
7. Aloe vera likes medium-high light, so keep it in a window if possible, and rotate it every couple months so it doesn't start leaning.

Extra info:

The best way to get an aloe pup is from a friend who already has a mature plant. The next best way is to acquire it (*safely!*) by finding a mature plant that has pups. Pups should be around 1/5 the size of the parent. Move soil away from the pup's base – you may be able to gently pull it free (don't rip!), otherwise cut it away with a sharp, clean knife.

If your aloe leaves are looking brown and feel mushy, it is getting too much water. Ease up on watering frequency, or re-pot into a better-draining container.

If the leaves look weak, pale, and/or creased, your pal just needs more light.



To use the aloe vera, cut off a portion of leaf and remove the spines, then cut in half, or into chunks. You can then scoop or squeeze out the gel. Be aware the skin and yellowish latex that oozes from it are not very safe to ingest - use the clear gel from inside only.

Cut leaves can keep for up to 2 weeks, wrap the cut end(s) in tinfoil, tightly wrap in plastic, and secure with rubber bands or string.

## Seems Like A Fungi

This is admittedly not the easiest way to grow mushrooms at home, but it is one of the cheapest methods, using coffee grounds and the stems of mushrooms from the supermarket. The steps might look complicated, but much of it boils down to: "just let it do its thing".

Buying spawn or a proper kit will likely produce more reliable results, but it costs much more upfront.

There is another method for using store-bought mushrooms called "spore printing", we won't cover that here, so maybe look it up and see if it's something you want to try too.

You will first need:

- Glass jar with lid, cleaned and sterilised.
- Button mushroom or oyster mushroom – preferably one that has white 'mold' (mycelium) on its stem, but this may not always be visible.
- Coffee grounds – preferably fresh, moist, and enough amount to fill your jar halfway.

Later, you may also need:

- Plastic tub or bucket, food grade
- More coffee grounds – enough to fill around half the bucket. You can mix in some shredded cardboard, if you like.

The steps:

1. Wash your filthy paws thoroughly!
2. Carefully cut the mushroom stem into 4 parts lengthways, and place onto the coffee grounds.
3. Put the lid on. Mycelium likes CO<sub>2</sub>, so this will help it grow faster.
4. Keep the jar in a dark-ish place at a room temperature of ~22°C. Try to leave it alone for a week or so!
5. Once the mycelium has fully colonised the substrate, it will look like the coffee grounds have white stuff all through it. If you want more mycelium, add more coffee grounds, put the lid on, leave it alone once again.
6. Transfer to your plastic container by scooping it all out, crumbling, and mixing into the new substrate, then keep in a cooler place (~14-18°C).
7. Make sure the substrate doesn't get too dry, give it a misting. When you see tiny baby mushrooms (primordia) appear, mist them at least twice daily.

8. Harvest about 1 week after you see the primordia appear.
9. If you want to try for another flush, let the substrate rest for a week, damp it through with water, and let it do its thing. You may be able to do this a couple times.



Extra info:

If you don't use ground coffee at home, ask some friends, or try a local café. They might also have a spare bucket!

Almost any container can work for the mycelium, even a soda bottle or paper cup. However, a glass jar will both let you see what's going on in the substrate, and be less likely to get mold.

If you *do* spot a patch or two of green mold, don't panic! There is a good chance the mycelium will conquer it.

Unlike button mushrooms, oyster mushrooms really enjoy indirect daylight. They also like to grow horizontally before going vertical, so if you're using a tub or bucket, you might want to poke some slits or holes (~2cm width) in the sides.

Be aware that when oyster mushrooms fruit, they drop a lot of spores which can trigger allergies in some folks. If you can't put them outside, stick to small-scale grows, and keep them somewhere with good ventilation.

# Sprout's Honour

Some seed suggestions for you...

<b>Grains</b>	amaranth, buckwheat, chia, flax, kamut, maize, millet, oats, rice, rye, sesame, spelt, wheat
<b>Herbs</b>	basil, caraway, chervil, chives, coriander, dill, fennel, parsley, fenugreek, horseradish, nigella
<b>Legumes</b>	adzuki beans, alfalfa, chickpeas, clover, lentils, mung beans, peas, quinoa, soybeans
<b>Vegetables</b>	beet, bok choy, broccoli, carrot, celery, chard, cress, chicory, cabbage, hemp, kale, kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, mustard, onion, purslane, radish, rocket, spinach, sunflower, turnip, wombok

Sprouts are full of good nutrients, often containing more than their final form would.

They are also super fast & easy to grow – no soil necessary!



You can find seed specifically for sprouting at health shops, garden centres, online, and even at some supermarkets. It's often just a couple bucks for a small packet, so it's a relatively low investment to give it a go.

Bulk buying works out much cheaper, as long as you have the storage space, and seeds can keep for around 1 year.

You will need:

- a clean, wide-mouthed container of any kind
- square of fabric or netting – this must be wider than the container's mouth, and suitable for easily filtering water through
- an elastic band or string (if not using mason jar with ring)
- seeds
- water

The steps:

1. Pour a thin layer of seeds into the container. Remember – these can grow up to 5 times in size, depending on the plant, so you don't need much.
2. Place the filter fabric over the mouth and secure tightly with elastic or string. Or, put the ring on (without the lid part) if using a mason jar.
3. Fill the container with water, give it a decent shake, and turn upside-down to drain. This should dislodge any dust or other particles.
4. Fill the container to 2/3 full with tepid water, and leave to soak overnight (around 8-12 hours).
5. After soaking, the seeds should have expanded a lot, around double in size. Turn the jar upside-down to drain the water out.

6. Refill with tepid water, and drain again. Place the jar in a relatively warm spot.
7. Repeat step 6 twice a day (morning & evening) for around a week.
8. Once you are happy with the size of your sprouts, rinse & drain once more. You can eat them right away, or store them in the fridge.

Extra info:

If your sprouts are pale, it's probably just from sitting in a dark area. For greener sprouts with stronger flavour, place your jar near a window.

It is best to eat your sprouts within 2 days of the final rinse, but they should keep in the fridge for 7-10 days. Cook stored sprouts thoroughly before eating to reduce risk of illnesses from bacteria.

You *can* use these sprouts to start growing microgreens, if you wish! However, that will entail replanting them into containers or trays with soil. They will also require a lot more light than sprouts.

## A Second Life For Scraps

Don't be so hasty putting veggie offcuts onto the scrap-heap – you might be able to regrow some of them! You may want to have some small pots or similar containers handy for this. Hey, sometimes even a shot glass will do!

Some of the suggestions in the table below will give you quite fast results, others are more long-haul.

Please note that there are quite a few other types of produce you can regrow from scraps which have been excluded from this table, as although you can start them off indoors, they will quickly need to be planted in an outdoor garden or very large container.



Celery, bok choy, cabbage, romaine	Cut base off, place bottom-down in bowl of shallow water. Replace water every 2-3 days. Plant into pot with soil once regrowth starts appearing.
Green onion, leek, fennel, scallion	Save bottom 2 inches of plant (roots intact), place upright into cup of water. Keep in a sunny spot, replacing water daily. Harvest when fully grown by cutting what you need. Leave roots in the water, repeat the process for more.
Garlic	Grow leaves: Place garlic clove root-down in a small container with a tiny bit of water. Keep in a sunny spot, cut from the top when a few inches tall, use for garnish. Grow bulbs: Plant garlic clove root-down in small container with soil, to about 5 cm below soil surface. Keep in a sunny spot, keep soil very moist. Cut back any new shoots, harvest bulb when ready.
Basil, rosemary, coriander	Cut 5-8 cm of new growth from established plant, just above two leaf nodes. Remove bottom leaves, place in a cup of water. Make sure the bottom is submerged. Keep in a sunny spot, replace water regularly. Allow roots to grow over 3 cm long, then transfer into a container with soil, and water regularly.
Ginger	Soak a piece of fresh ginger overnight. Check that the ginger has little bumps on the end afterwards. Plant ginger in a small container of moist soil, growth buds pointing up. Water daily until shoots appear, then water regularly. Harvest in 1 year, or when buds are of a usable size.
Carrot	Place carrot tops bottom down on a plate with enough water to reach ~0.5 cm past the base. Keep near a sunny spot, change water daily. Once the greens have regrown, transfer to a container with soil, water regularly. The greens can be used in salads.

## References

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## About Us

Piwakawaka Collective is based in Kirikiriroa, Aotearoa.

We are mainly focused on making zines and other printables such as posters and stickers for sharing. Please feel free to share our stuff if you find it to be useful and/or enjoyable.

We are happy to receive feedback, including any corrections or suggestions, and we will endeavour to make updates wherever and whenever possible.

We are also happy to discuss potential future topics, written contributions, art, etc.

You can contact us via:

Email: [piwakawakacollective@protonmail.com](mailto:piwakawakacollective@protonmail.com)

Mastodon: [kolektiva.social/@piwakawaka](https://kolektiva.social/@piwakawaka)

Matrix room: [#piwakawaka:matrix.org](https://matrix.org/#piwakawaka:matrix.org)



